

Residential development East of Yucaipa Ridge

Re: Estate project Tract # 20375

From: Pierre Assaf, 9782 Azurite Street, Yucaipa

To: City Council Members of Yucaipa:

Mr. Mayor David Avila. Mayor Pro Tem Mr. Justin Beaver, Mr. Greg Bogh, Mr. Bobby Duncan & Mr. Jon Thorp

Housing development is expected as the Inland Empire population has grown exponentially over the past 40 years. Redlands, Yucaipa, Calimesa, Cherry Valley, Beaumont and Banning have seen a boom of “checkerboard” or “cookie-cutter” housing developments.

Residential zoning ordinances in the North bench of Yucaipa have discouraged such traditional designs by requiring minimum lot sizes, uniform road frontage and lot setbacks, specific road standards, and other standard requirements.

The rural community of Yucaipa turned down incorporation on Nov. 3, 1987 citing the potential destruction of the charm and easy-going country lifestyle the city offers. By December of 1987, some cityhood advocates suggested incorporation to prevent annexation of Yucaipa by Redlands.

Redlands was a quaint city until the 70's. It became progressively crowded since then with clusters of houses mushrooming where orange groves stood. Now the city is plagued by alarming statistics about crime and quality of life. The chance of becoming a victim of either violent or property crime in Redlands is currently **1 in 35**. Based on FBI crime data¹. Redlands is no longer one of the safest communities in America as it used to be.

Relative to California, Redlands has a crime rate that is higher than 81% of the state's cities and towns of all sizes.

By comparison according to 2021 statistics, your chance of being a victim of violent crime in Yucaipa is **1 in 354** and property crime is **1 in 90**. This is

¹<https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/ca/redlands/crime>

the same rate since 1990. Please consider this association of urban crowding with crime rate when you weigh on the merit of the above project,

In December 1989 Yucaipa was incorporated. Shortly after, 1000 acres of orange and grapefruit trees were bulldozed to make way for Chapman Heights, a development of 3000 homes, two schools and a golf course. Most of us living in Yucaipa since the early 80's did appreciate the tax revenue to the city, the widening and beautification of Oak Glen Road and the manicured golf course.

The Orange County style of development had finally reached the "Green Valley". But it came at a price. We missed the acreage of citrus fruits, the smell of orange blossoms in the spring and the peaceful solitude of our slice of "middle America". The Yucaipa lakes Park gradually became crowded and RVs lined up on Friday evening to guarantee a camping spot on the weekend. Car traffic increased

Outbreaks of psychosocial problems have been associated with overdevelopment² leading to excessive traffic, noise, light and environmental pollution. The uniqueness of the North Bench requires preventive housing policies to minimize the risks and consequences of overcrowding while maintaining its charm and the quality of life of its citizens. Persons under 18 years represent about 25% of the population and persons 65 years and over represent about 15%. In both groups, the risk of motor vehicle crashes is higher. High car traffic is a factor in these vulnerable groups

The east side of the North bench with its hillsides, is subject to destructive fires.

The State of California identified three hazard zones³ both in State and Local Responsibility Areas: "Moderate", "High" and "Very High"

The proposed development area being discussed, is located in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in SRA (State Responsibility Area) as per map of the State Fire Marshal Mike Richwine.

² Household overcrowding trajectories and mental well-being <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114051>

³ <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/media/5953/yucaipa.pdf>

State Farm (my insurer for 40 years) increased by 60% the cost of my homeowners policy for the coming year despite having no claims. I was told by my agent in Redlands that Statefarm no longer sells home insurance in Yucaipa due to the high risk of fire danger and to feel free to shop for a cheaper homeowners policy!

The proposed development is in the “Very High” fire zone and is without easy access and egress in case of a fire or other emergency. This consists of a potential death trap especially for senior citizens.

We often hear that the State of California is breathing down the neck of the local government to allow more real estate development. The truth is that state senators come-up often with vacuous bills in response to perceived crisis soon superseded by more Bills. For example, Gavin Newsom signed California Senate Bill 330, on October 9 2019 aimed at boosting homebuilding in California, with many provisions like “fast tracking” approved new developments and “forbidding” local governments from imposing population and housing caps. These so-called provisions to alleviate housing shortages in the State did not spur any new building activity. During the first half of 2019, residential building permits actually dropped 20% from prior years, U.S. Census figures show. “Housing starts” in the US sank 14.4% in May of 2022⁴, with a steep drop since April 2020, as the housing market is facing high pressure from rising inflation and rising mortgage rates, which coupled with elevated building material costs and supply constraints weigh on consumers’ affordability according to Trading Economics.

On September 16, 2021, the State of California adopted Senate Bill 9 which aimed to streamline housing permitting and increase density to create more “inclusive and vibrant neighborhoods” across the State. THE CALIFORNIA HOME ACT Senate Bill 9 (pertaining to housing in urban areas⁵). It became effective January 1, 2022. That Senate Bill clearly states that building or modifications to a property need to be in keeping with the look of the neighborhood. This bill prohibits the development of small subdivisions and prohibits lot splits on adjacent parcels to prevent investor

⁴ <https://tradingeconomics.com/united-states/housing-start>

⁵ urban area is defined as the region surrounding a city

speculation. You can see the pendulum swinging between progressive and conservative whim.

The proposed development at hand is definitely not in keeping with the “look of the neighborhood” stated in the Senate Bill 9 as a caveat.

Moreover this bill emphatically excludes very high fire hazard severity zones. The State of California states that if local governments do not allow people to build homes in an area, then other measures stipulated in the bill do not apply!

The California Legislation as stated in Assembly Bill No. 3074 CHAPTER 259⁶ speaks of the effect of catastrophic wildfires that pose an urgent threat to lives, properties, and resources in California. The question is: Does the 52 acres proposed for the Yucaipa Ridge development complies with the intent of the legislature? I think not. A tight cluster of 51 units shoehorned over approximately 12.75 acres [555390 square feet] is a disaster waiting to happen as there are no escape routes east, north or south of the project! Only a tight meandering westward from Crystal street to Azurite street to Juniper street to Bryant street. This development represents a danger to the adjacent properties of the North Bench in case of emergencies like fires or earthquakes, It is therefore rationally inconceivable unless the zoning of the area is maintained and the number of units is decreased by two third.

Respectfully submitted

Pierre Assaf

P.S. Both the residents attending the meeting and the City Council members want the City of Yucaipa to grow and prosper. Collectively we need to maintain the charm and easy-going country lifestyle our city is blessed with. Wise and sensible stewardship should speak against the greedy tactics of Real estate speculators

⁶ Approved by Governor September 29, 2020